Learning Log # 4

I have used a variety of visual charts, schedules, first/then charts, and adapted books with students that I have worked with in the past. I really enjoy making the visual strategies, as you can truly personalize them, but then tend to be extremely time-consuming. I also enjoyed learning about the various augmentative communication devices. Although I have seen many of them, I have never worked with students who had them on their IEP. I look back now and realize that many of the students that I worked with (especially those with autism), would have greatly benefitted from these types of devices. I think that a larger part of the problem is that a lot of people do know much about them or how to utilize them within the classroom. People are generally afraid of change. Unfortunately, this usually leads to problems that may have been be able to be prevented.

In the last week or 2 I received training on a program called Word Q. This program allows students with low (approx 3rd grade) reading capabilities to access a variety of online and offline reading. For example, if a student is on the internet and wants to read about a certain animal, he or she could highlight the paragraph and it will read it back. Another great aspect to this program is with writing. Once you create a profile, the program begins to remember how you create sentences and your misspellings of certain words. There are drop-down boxes that allow the student to pick out the word that they are trying to spell (it says it out loud). I have to say that I absolutely love this program because it has helped the students to become more independent (I don’t have to read things to them all of the time). It also helps them to practice vocabulary and reinforces those vocabulary skills. It can be quite challenging at times when your students range from the kindergarten to the 6th grade reading levels.

Throughout the last several years as an educator and behavioral support counselor, I have picked up on some great ideas/websites/etc. And this website: <http://www.tinsnips.org/> has a great variety of resources, especially for those of you who work with students with communication difficulties. It is also a great resource for templates for communication boards, recipes, directions/steps for toileting, etc. Before I had access to boardmaker, I used to have to come up with and search out a lot of these things on my own. <http://www.sitesforteachers.com/index.html> The following website also offers a lot of sites for teachers and related services. Being able to incorporate any type of visual into a lesson, a schedule, or daily living skill, truly enhances the rate of success for any student. When I first started working with this population of students (ED, LD, ODD, TBI, Mild MR, etc.) I didn’t think that visuals would really be any help. I was so used to using visuals with students who had communication issues (especially autism). But what I found was that most of my students have benefitted from having these visual supports within the classroom. It has made transitions easier which has also allowed us to manage behaviors more effectively. If a student has issues with verbal processing, then they are not going to understand you when you try to “reason” with them. Sometimes all they need is a very concrete and matter-of-fact picture to help them make the connections that they need.